

Brook T. Smith Launchpad

Columbia and
Charleston, South
Carolina

February 20-21, 2026

South Carolina Innovation and Entrepreneurship Study Tour

Meet with South
Carolina government
officials.



Build connections
with industry
professionals.



Learn about the
history of
South Carolina.



Connect with other
like-minded,
motivated students.



45 Students Attend Full-Scholarship Trip Around South Carolina

COLUMBIA

Students had the opportunity to visit Columbia landmarks, such as the State Capitol. Secretary of Commerce Harry Lightsey talked to students about his journey of working up to his current position, as well as engaged in a dynamic question-and-answer session.



CHARLESTON

On the first day of the trip, students went on a tour of MUSC and the Harbor Entrepreneurship Center, gaining insight on innovation and local businesses. The second day consisted of tours of the Old Slave Mart Museum, Fort Sumter, Battery Park, and Magnolia Plantation. Students learned about the history of our state, as well as the lives of the professionals that they interacted with.



CONNECTION

Speakers across the tours included Secretary of Commerce Harry Lightsey, Kimberly Allen, Dr. Jessie Goodwin, Grady Johnson, David Thedinga, Stephen Scates, Elaine Zehntner, as well as others.



STUDY TOUR

AGENDA

01

State Capitol

Arrive and Tour State House and Listen to Guest Speakers

02

MUSC

Medical University of South Carolina Tour and Presentation with Q & A

03

Entrepreneurship

Harbor Entrepreneurship Center Tour and Speaker Sessions

04

Old Slave Mart

Old Slave Mart Museum Tour and Informational Session

05

Walking Tour

Guided Walking Tour of the Historic District in Charleston

06

Fort Sumpter

Learn about Fort Sumpter with Guide

07

Battery Park

Walking Tour of Fortified Wall in Battery Park with Guide

08

Boone Hall

Tractor Ride: Farm & Nature Tour with Guide

09

Plantation House

Plantation House Tour with Guide

10

Theater

Gullah Theater Performance Including Historic Songs

11

Garden

Formal Garden Tour (Self Guided)

12

Gin House Museum

Gin House Museum Including Black History Month Program (Self Guided)

Make Memories: Take the Photo

COLUMBIA AND CHARLESTON

Students began the day bright and early, departing Clemson at 6 a.m. Their first stop was Columbia to tour the Capitol.

State Capitol

Students had the opportunity to tour the State Capitol and listen to guest speakers, including Secretary of Commerce Harry Lightsey. He provided insights on how he worked up into this position.



Question and Answer

Harry Lightsey engaged in a dynamic question and answer student with 45 Clemson students, offering advice on how to get started in a role similar to his and on state businesses.

The Trip Continues: MUSC

Dr. Jessie Goodwin and Kimberly Allen toured students around MUSC's Blue Sky Lab, which is similar to Clemson's Brook T. Smith Launchpad. Additionally, students engaged in a panel centered around patents.



Harbor Entrepreneurship Center

Grady Johnson gave a tour of the Harbor Entrepreneurship Center, while David Thedinga, Stephen Scates, and Elaine Zehntner hosted a panel and Q&A session to connect with students.

The first day consisted of learning about business ventures, patents, and government officials and their journeys.

Learn and Grow: Historic Charleston

CHARLESTON

The second day was spending exploring and learning about the economic and cultural history of Charleston, a historic coastal town.

The Old Slave Mart Museum

The Old Slave Mart Museum presentation was an uncensored recap of the history of slavery that occurred in Charleston. Additionally, students had the opportunity to explore the museum exhibits.



Historic Charleston Walking Tour

Groups were guided around the historic district of Charleston by locals. Stops included Fort Sumpter, Battery Park, Rainbow Row, and old churches. Having a guide made the tour incredibly memorable.

Boone Hall Plantation

Boone Hall Plantation is filled with a rich history that provided a lot of learning opportunities for students on the Study Tour. The visit began with a tractor ride lead by a guide, including a farm and nature tour. Students also had the chance to tour the Plantation House and learn about why the owners built the house in the way that they did. Additionally, a performance at Gullah Theater took place, as well as two self-guided tours: the formal garden tour and the Gin House Museum tour, including a program dedicated to Black History Month.



After two days full of learning and adventure, students returned to Clemson at midnight Saturday with knowledge and curiosity to last a lifetime.

STUDENT TESTIMONIALS



I met new people and got the opportunity to see cities I have never seen before. I really liked learning about the history behind Charleston. I truly feel like I learned a lot, and I would be interested in participating in another trip through the Launchpad!

- Marianna Turturro



I especially enjoyed our visit to the Charleston Harbor Entrepreneurship Center. Hearing from Grady Johnson and other guest speakers provided real-world insight into what it takes to build and sustain ventures in South Carolina.

- Sarthak Nikhal



I was pleasantly surprised by the wide-variety of topics covered. As an aspiring law student, I loved the trip to the Capitol and listening to the presentation on patents at MUSC. Additionally, it was beneficial to see Charleston through a historical lens.

- Molly Trainor



STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

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This trip really allowed me to explore the history behind the US, and as an international student, really helped me get a grasp on how the US functions in terms of entrepreneurship and allowed me to learn about the deep history of how the US was built and how it functions today.

- Saranyan Balan



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This was my first time visiting both Columbia and Charleston, and I think it was the best way to see them for the first time. I learned a lot of amazing things about South Carolinas huge impact on entrepreneurship and all the steps they are taking to keep it going.

- David Musser

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I truly enjoyed the study tour, and one of the most meaningful parts for me was our visit to Boone Hall Plantation, especially the Gullah presentation. Seeing this history in person made what I've learned throughout my education feel much more real, and hearing Gullah descendants share their stories, songs, and traditions was powerful. It gave me a deeper appreciation for their culture and the strength behind it.

- Sofia Cividanes

